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"THE HOUSE OF GOD"

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

ON THE

SESQUI-CENTENNIAL

OF THE

Old South Meeting-House

OF NEWBURYPORT, MASS.

BY THE PASTOR

HORACE CARTER HOVEY, D. D

December 16th, 1906

Compliments of

Horace C. Hovey.

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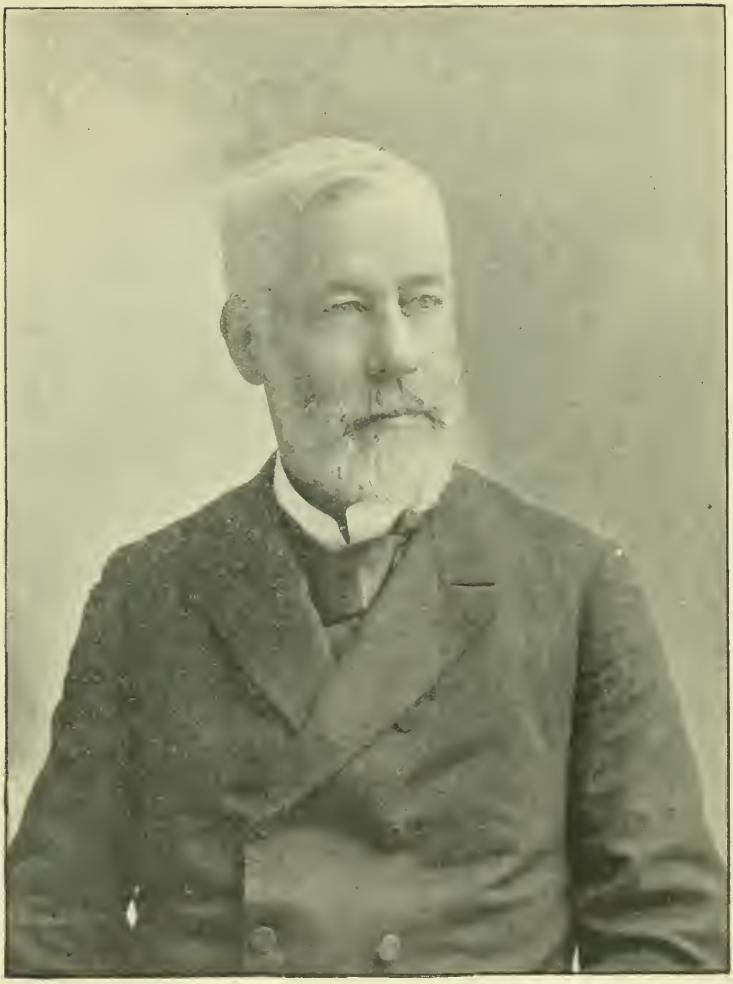


REV. HORACE C. HOVEY.

DEDICATORY GREETING

To the First Presbyterian Congregation. Beloved Parishioners and Friends:—

It has been my custom to give you a pastoral New Year's Greeting. Let the custom now be varied. Accept instead the historical discourse given orally near the close of the Old Year, and which in printed form is hereby dedicated to you. It is meant that a copy shall come to the door of each family in the flock, as the Pastor's New Year's Gift for 1907 bearing his silent Benediction.

The story told in these pages does not say all that could be said about our denomination, even in this locality. It simply retraces the old paths in which your fathers and mothers used to go; and relates the efforts of sires and sons to build, renew and adorn a spacious meeting-house which has stood for orthodoxy, order and liberty during all the one hundred and fifty years that have passed since its strong foundations were laid and its solid oaken frame was reared to the glory of God.

I greet you, not only as heirs of a sturdy New England Presbyterianism, but as heirs of God and joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ. This house of God is part of your sacred heritage. Keep it for the generations to come; that they, too, within these hallowed walls, may "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Your friend and Pastor,

HORACE CARTER HOVEY.

First Presbyterian Parsonage,
Newburyport, Mass.
January 1st, 1907.

THE OLD SOUTH MEETING-HOUSE.

OLD SOUTH MEETING-HOUSE

To the Pastors and Churches of Newbury and Newburyport.
Greeting in the Name of the Lord:—

DEAR BRETHREN:—

Ten years ago the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the First Presbyterian Church and Society was celebrated, and you aided us so royally then that we are encouraged now to ask you to join in a less elaborate commemoration of the erection of our meeting-house in 1756. At that time it was regarded as the most spacious edifice of its kind in New England; for which reason, as well as on other grounds, it was often used in connection with events of general religious or patriotic importance.

What is familiarly styled the "Old South Meeting-house" is the oldest house of worship in this region. Its history will be told by the Pastor, on the evening of the third Sabbath in December (December 16th, 1906), at 7.30 o'clock. Other parts of the service will be taken by the pastors of those churches whence we came forth and of those that went forth from us; and they, and all other ministers and congregations are invited to attend, as far as may be consistent with their own more immediate plans and duties.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace, we remain,

Sincerely yours,

HORACE C. HOVEY, Pastor,

WILLIAM BINLEY, Clerk of the Church,

WILLIAM E. CHASE, Chairman of the Society Committee.

Newburyport, Mass., December 1, 1906.

THE SERMON

Text:—Genesis, 28-17, "This Is None Other but the House of God, and This Is the Gate of Heaven."

Ten years ago was celebrated the 150th anniversary of the founding of the First Presbyterian Church of Newburyport; today we commemorate the erection of its historic Old South Meeting House in 1756. We are also mindful of the fact that this is the birthday of its illustrious founder, George Whitefield, who was born Dec. 16, 1714, and whose remains are held here as a sacred trust.

When the fugitive Jacob uttered the words of the text, the rude cromlech he had reared amid the rocky wastes of Syria was the only true "house of God" on the globe; and as such it was the precursor of every tabernacle, temple, synagogue, cathedral, chapel and meeting house of any kind in all Christendom. How little he may have realized it. Probably he thought that he built his primitive Bethel just for God and himself; yet it was a heritage for all who love the Lord.

Thus the lowly beginnings of any one of our New England colonies are the common heritage of those who come after them. It is estimated that there are now about 500,000 inhabitants of the magnificent valley of the Merrimac, between this city and Lakeport. And whether they all realize it or not, every one of them ought to regard with reverence and gratitude those pious pioneers who landed from open boats on a June Sabbath, in 1635, on the north shore of the Quascacunquen river, now the Parker, 100 rods

below the bridge that today spans the stream; and true to their faith assembled under a majestic oak, heard a sermon by Rev. Thomas Parker, and entered into a solemn covenant with God. If that brave old oak were standing, it would be for us what Plymouth Rock is for the sons of the Pilgrims. With Parker for pastor, and Rev. James Noyes as teacher, they laid the foundations on which subsequent generations have built institutions of religion and learning that are the glory of all the towns and cities which sprang from that remote beginning.

A rolling drum, instead of a church-going bell, called the pioneers to their log meeting house, all the men armed "with muskets, matches, powder and bullets," to repel any sudden foe. By law no dwelling could stand more than half a mile from the sanctuary. It was ordered that "every householder, both men and women, must sit in those seats that are appointed them during their lives." Such rigid rules had to be modified, of course, but they show the spirit of our sires, and also explain the tenacity with which they held on to those, who, under new conditions, wanted to occupy, not only other seats, but other houses of worship.

For 63 years there was only one church in Newbury. Yet we are not to infer that all was peace. Forty pages, octavo, in fine print, are taken up, in Coffin's History of Newbury, with the details of strife as to church polity; and it is the lamentable fact that each of the older churches of the community was torn away from the mother church. We have no wish to revive or review those ancient controversies. To some degree they may have been necessary in the interest of religious liberty. We refer to them only for the reason that it has been the custom to speak of "The Presbyterian schism," as if ours was the only society that parted irregularly from the parent stock; whereas we were not "sinners above all other Galileans." The trouble grew from the system of parish taxation, which bore very hard on us, for the reason that four different parishes, namely, the First, the Third, the Byfield and the Salisbury ones, insisted on our paying taxes to them after we had set up for ourselves, (as our records show) and relief did not come till we made a formal appeal to the king, the official copy of which is amid our archives, setting forth grievances enough to astonish the reader, and amply justify our course as taken.

Preliminary to our main task it may interest you to learn the exact dates of the principal houses of worship in this community. As you are aware, the First Presbyterian, or "Old South" meeting house was erected in 1756, to take the place of a small chapel of which we shall speak more fully presently. The fifth meeting house of the Oldtown church was built in 1868, across the street from the site of its predecessors; the Prospect street meeting house was built in 1793; the Second Presbyterian in 1796; St. Paul's Episcopal in 1800; the First Religious Society, or Unitarian, (formerly the third of Newbury), in 1801; the Advent church in 1858; the Baptist was built in 1848, and remodeled in 1873; the People's M. E. church, in 1825, was enlarged in 1871 and 1888; the Washington street M. E. church in 1867; the North Congregational in 1861; the Belleville Congregational in 1867; Christ's Chapel in 1886; the Church of the Immaculate Conception was dedicated in 1853; and the Church of St. Aloysius de Gonzaga in 1905. All these dates refer to the present edifices; and no mention is made of such as no longer exist, or have been put to some secular use.

Reasons exist why each religious body should cherish its own sanctuary, and each has a history worth telling. Differing as we do in doctrine and in polity, we agree in trying to bring men to God; and so far as any congregation does this, its building, of whatever name, is "none other but the House of God and Gate of Heaven."

Permit a few words concerning the chapel on High street that was our Sabbath home during the first 14 years of our career. The date of its erection as found on our memorial tablet is said to have been 1743. In this we followed the statements made in the historical sermons by my predecessors. But Coffin and Currier agree in fixing it in 1742, instead of 1743; quoting as proof a letter written by Rev. Matthias Plant to Dr. Bearcroft of London, dated Feb. 15, 1743, in which he speaks of it as having been erected "since July, 1742," adding that it was remarkably flourishing, its minister having at a single communion added 53 new names to his list of members. We may therefore accept 1742 as correct, instead of 1743.

High street was then known as Norfolk street, on which the chapel stood, in the "Story garden," between Lime street, as since

laid out, and Chandler's lane, later called Prison street, because the jail was on it, then King street, and finally, as now Federal street. A member of the Story family told me that she remembered seeing the old foundations in their garden in her girlhood. The location was admirable, and might have been wisely retained to the present time.

Those who worshipped in it were styled "Newlights," and also "Joppaites." Previous to its erection they had met in "Mr. John Brown's barn," and then "at the house of one Simon by the seaside;" whence possibly the nickname of "Joppa," which was attached to a region bounded by Rolfe's' lane (now Ocean avenue) and Cottle's lane (now Bromfield street). Joppa and Belleville were annexed under those names to Newburyport in 1851.

Moody D. Cook, in his address before the Ladies' and Gentlemen's Association, in 1862, remarks that "the first meeting house was a small building and withal a plain one built at a trifling expense; and consequently it became in a few years dilapidated." But we add that, small and plain as it may have been, it was a place of refuge for the followers of Whitefield when all other doors were closed against them and their renowned leader. Rev. S. P. Williams relates, in his anniversary sermon in 1826, that, when Whitefield was preaching in front of it, a stone hurled at him nearly struck the Bible from his hand. His reply to this brutal assault was worthy of his divine Master: "I have a warrant from God to preach. His seal (holding up the Bible) is in my hand; and I stand in the king's highway." Splendid declaration of religious freedom!

For two years these persecuted people sought in vain for a fair hearing. An "ex parte council" gave them what would now be regarded by every one as their sacred rights; but they waited long for proper recognition. Meanwhile they were ably ministered to by Rev. Joseph Adams of Byfield, a twin brother of Rev. Benjamin Adams, sons of Captain Abraham Adams, who lived where his descendant George W. Adams lives now. The captain was a man of enterprise, who built and launched coasting vessels from the river in front of his house. Mrs. Adams was Anne Longfellow, a niece of Samuel Sewell. Joseph's brother, Samuel Adams, quaintly testified, "I Igenerally find the Lord graciously visits me under the means of grace used in the new congregation of Christians." In preparing the historical tablet recently placed on our walls it was

felt that prominence should be given to Rev. Joseph Adams, who, though never a pastor here, paved the way for those that came after him. He was a brave pioneer, even though it may have been said of him that he was "more zealous than discreet."

Preparatory to more aggressive and permanent work his people, on the 25th of November, 1745, formed what they styled, "A new society for the settlement of the gospel ministry," and their subscription list was signed by 102 names. Nineteen who had separated from the First Church of Newbury, signed a mutual covenant Jan. 3, 1746, "to walk together as a church of Christ, according to the rules and order of the Gospel." Four days later they called as pastor, by Whitefield's advice, Rev. Jonathan Parsons, whom he had met at New Haven, Conn., in 1740, and with whom he had formed a fast friendship which lasted till he finally expired in his arms. Accordingly Mr. Parsons was "liberated" from his church at Lyme, Conn., accepted the call, and on March 12, 1746, was installed over the flock that worshipped in the chapel on High street.

There was no council, for no church was in fellowship with them. They were not yet identified with the only Presbytery in New England, just formed by two ministers who stood suspended for sympathy with Whitefield, together with a third whom these two ordained with the aid of Jonathan Edwards. Hence they acted immediately though voting to join the new Presbytery on certain conditions and with certain reserved rights, which at a later date were fully granted.

The pastor elect preached from I Peter, 5:2, "Steadfast in the faith." He then offered his testimonials, which were approved. Then with the uplifted hand Mr. Parsons said, "In the presence of God and these witnesses, I take this people to be my people." The congregation arose, and their clerk, John Brown, on their behalf, said, "In the presence of God and these witnesses, we take this man to be our minister." Thus people and pastor were married until parted by death. The record reads that when they finally joined the Presbytery it was "both by choice and by compulsion." It was by the advice not only of Whitefield, but also of friendly ministers like Mr. Jewett of Rowley, and Daniel Rogers of Ipswich, as the best way.

On the other hand the First and Third churches of

Newbury, from whom had gone out the majority of those who formed the new church, frowned on it as a misguided band, withheld regular letters of admission, and the Third church appointed a special day of fasting and prayer on the sad occasion. The "low and vulgar" pelted Parsons and Whitefield with clods and stones; and the town officials handled roughly those who refused to pay taxes for a ministry from which they had withdrawn. The ignominies inflicted would be incredible were it not for the proofs on file. Indeed they became so serious as to lead the Presbyterians to draw up a formal remonstrance to King George.

In a letter by Mr. Parsons accompanying the remonstrance, he says that his church had "more poor widows than all the other congregations in town put together; left so by the death of their husbands in the Capt. Breton expedition." What a chapter of sorrow is thus condensed. Yet the congregation outgrew its chapel till it had the courage to plan and build what was then the largest meeting house on the continent, being 100 feet long by 60 feet in width in the clear. Willard J. Hale, Esq., register of deeds, kindly gave me transcripts of the deeds conveying the ground to "the owners of the pews that shall be in the meeting house that shall be built on said land," dated April 12, 1756, namely one lot sold to them by Jonathan Beck, for 37 pounds, and another by Parker Noyes for 76 pounds, three shillings and four pence, making a total cost of 113 pounds, three shillings and four pence; the land being on Chandler's lane (now Federal street), and "a way two rods wide," to which in 1764 the name of School street was given. Additional land was bought in 1810 where the sexton's cottage stands, and for the chapel.

The heavy frame work of oak, from timbers grown on the grounds of some of the members, and which has stood unchanged for 150 years, was raised, according to Caleb Greenleaf's almanac, "beginning July 5, and finishing on the 7th, and not one oath heard and nobody hurt." The timbers are still visible in the vestibule, and under the floor, and in the roof, rough-hewn as they were. The nails were all of wrought iron. The tower was not finished till two years later, and with the loss of one workman, Samuel Pettingell, who fell from the staging

and was killed. After the frame was raised, the people gathered to hear a sermon by Rev. John Moorehead of Boston, from the text, "And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice, (II Chron. 7:12). And that was the first of all the thousands of sermons that have been delivered in this sanctuary.

Swift work was done, for the house was fully enclosed by August 15th, when the first sermon by the pastor was delivered from the entire 122d Psalm. The record reads, "August 19 and 20, we pulled down our old meeting house," that is, the chapel on Norfolk, now High, street.

For 73 years the inner arrangements remained the same, and they are worthy of description. The main entrance was on School street, whence a broad aisle went to the pulpit, and another ran in front of the wall pews. The pulpit was higher than now and above it hung a sounding board. At the head of the pulpit stairs was a recess with a seat for the sexton, who sat there during service. The house was lighted by two-story windows that have since been cut into single long windows. The dependence at evening meetings was on tallow candles, and it was the sexton's duty to see that they were properly snuffed. What a contrast to our modern brilliant methods of illumination. In front of the pulpit were seats for the ruling elders, and in front of them again were seats for the deacons; and what is more they were always occupied. After the death of Whitefield his tomb was just in front of the deacons' seats. Square pews were the prevailing style; of which 140 were on the main floor. There were six or more free slips in the gallery and others on the main floor. The entrances to the galleries were back of where the organ and the pulpit now stand. There were 100 pews in the galleries.

In the earlier days the singing was congregational. Probably the "Psalms and Hymns" by Isaac Watts was the book first in use. But when "Watts and Select" appeared in 1823, it was adopted and continued in use till our present hymn book, Robinson's "Spiritual Songs," came out in 1883. At first it was the custom for the psalm or hymn to be "lined out" by a deacon and then sung by the people.

Some finally rebelled and sang the psalm right through, while

others waited loyally for the "lining out." The result was the formation of a choir, with gallery seats on one side for men and on the other for women. The tunes were set by a pitch-pipe till Mr. Dana's day when violin, bass-viol, clarinet and bassoon came in; and we find among our files of receipts those for the sums paid to the players on these instruments.

Near the choir were seats for the "children of the asylum" cared for by an association of ladies. Tything men sat near by, with their rods of office wherewith to touch naughty boys. The "negro pews" remain to this day, that once were occupied by slaves, whose owners' names we know from our assessors' books. These pews were open in front but boarded up at the side. There were some 25 slaves owned among us.

Parsons and Murray always preached in gown and bands; and the former was fond of fine clothes, ruffled shirt fronts, silk stockings and gold lace. Yet those early pastors were wonderfully prevalent in prayer, and the people trusted in a prayer-hearing God who took a real interest in their every day life. Requests were sent up during the second singing, as many sometimes as 40 or more, which the pastor would classify for mention in his long prayer. Some requests were pathetic, telling of domestic bereavement, others were for men or ships at sea, while others were peculiar or even whimsical. One of the latter class has come down to us, that a man sent up for his wife, "Jemima requests prayers for herself, being in a terrible pickle." Another man asked for prayer because he was going to New York City.

The solemnity of the services was marred by the fact that the seats were hung on hinges, and were lifted while the people stood in time of prayer, and then were apt to fall with a "bang" at the Amen. Hence printed slips were attached to each pew, reading thus: "Persons are requested to lift their seats and let them down without noise."

These seats were unpainted and without cushions; yet people sat on them to hear sermons from one to two hours long, and often highly doctrinal; as for instance Murray's sermon on "The Origin of Evil," filling in its printed form 100 pages octavo; and his sermon on "Justification by Imputed Righteousness," filling 135 pages octavo. Only think of it, ye who want a minister to tell all he knows in 25 minutes and to skip the hard places at that! In

those days there were no frescoed walls, or painted curtains, or mural tablets to distract the attention. The walls were simply whitewashed, and the floors were guiltless of carpets.

In winter each family would have in its pew one or more foot stoves for the use of the women and of the aged men; and the snoving to and fro of these little stoves over the bare floor caused a constant disturbance throughout the meeting house. We recently found a stack of them stored away in the attic, but they have mysteriously disappeared. Thus it was for 63 years, and yet the church was crowded. Finally, on the 25th of December, 1819, a special parish meeting was called, which, on December 29th, "voted $100 to provide stove or stoves to warm the house." But alas, Mr. Milton's church met one day earlier, and sent a committee to buy the only stoves to be had, and our people were obliged to wait a while. Finally we bought two "plain stoves," which were put in the broad aisle; one near the door, with a long pipe running under the southeast gallery and finding outlet through a window; and the other near the pulpit with a pipe running in the opposite direction under the northeast gallery. Mr. Cook relates, from his own memory, that as the pipes were not duly connected no fire was made in them on the first Sabbath after their being put in place; "yet an opposer was so affected by the imaginary heat, that he fainted, and was carried out of the church." We came across an anonymous rescription of the incident among other documents that was extremely funny. A difficulty naturally arose as to the draught of stoves rigged as we have described; and after fighting with smoke and soot for a season the bright idea occurred to the fathers to build chimneys into which the stove pipes led instead of going out the windows. When the building was remodeled a little later, the large niches visible each side of the main entrance were occupied by the stoves, and the pipes ran across to the chimney at the rear, a plan still in vogue in some of our sister churches.

Bishop Clarke, in a letter to the speaker, mentions what I do not remember seeing elsewhere described, namely, "a unique chandelier, the like of which was never seen in any other building." Dr. George Clarke, his brother, speaks of "sponge-like ornaments on the ceiling above the chandelier," which were his frequent study in boyhood.

In these days, when we aim to have a Bible in every house and to have it read in every school, it seems strange that it should ever have been regarded as improper in any of our Protestant churches; yet it was not read from the pulpit of the Third parish prior to 1750, nor from that of the First parish till authorized by a vote reached after a long discussion, April 19, 1769, in these words, "that it is agreeable to the church that the Scriptures be read in public." In the Presbyterian service the Bible was always publicly read; and we still keep in our pulpit the so-called "Whitefield Bible," given by Ralph Cross, though at a later day laid aside for the more modern one presented by Moses Pettingell.

The first bell was bought in 1772, as proved by papers on file; though not "raised to the top of the steeple" till 1785, at which time the first tower clock was also set in place, though the history of neither bell nor clock is fully known. The old dials were hexagonal, and had but a single hand, an arrow, marking the hours —the minutes might take care of themselves. The bell we now have was cast in 1802 by Paul Revere, and was bought in 1803, and we hold the autograph receipt of Paul Revere among our treasures.

From the earliest period of church history our risen Lord is supposed to have broken from the tomb at early cock-crowing; and on thousands of spires the "bird of dawn" has been mounted as an emblem of the resurrection. The cock on our spire was put there in 1759, and is therefore 147 years old. Several times he has been taken down to be gilded and set back again. Two such occasions are memorable. In 1848 it was curiously decreed that the spire was unsafe, though of one solid piece of white oak, tapering from base to top. The saw was freely used, pulleys and snatch-blocks were rigged, and horses and oxen tried to pull it down. The horses took fright and started so suddenly that the spire fell point downward into Federal street. While in mid-air the cock slipped from his perch and flew, like a thing of life, to Spring street, where he alighted with slight harm. A new spire having been built, Captain Nathan Plumer, aided by Mr. Philip Lord, hoisted the weather-cock to his place once more. Before coming down Captain Plumer slapped it on the side, shouting, "Good bye, old bird." It remained undisturbed for 20 years.

In 1868 Mr. Hartwell Baker, brought up by George W. Hale,

and for a time in the employ of Jos. B. Creasey, painter, repainted the meeting house. He managed the steeple by rigging, with no staging. The weather-cock was taken down and gilded anew. It was found to be of copper, and Mr. Baker tells me it weighs 86 pounds, which does not agree with another statement that it weighs 56 pounds. It is hollow, and its sides have been pierced and patched for putting within sundry coins, notes, pictures and relics, which are probably there today. When the bird was replaced on its lofty perch the schools and factories were stopped, and a great crowd stood to see the performance. The brass band played while, at 2 p. m., Mr. Baker mounted astride the rooster and whirled it around. Mr. Hiram MacIntosh was a witness to this feat and took a picture of the daring rider.

But the people—ah, the people, underneath that steeple! What throngs there were! Dr. Vermilye says that, as far back as 1749, 1000 souls worshipped as best they could in the High street chapel. That may be an exaggeration. But I find a list of heads of families remaining after the exodus of the Prospect street and Second Presbyterian churches; and they numbered 216. And allowing five to a family, a fair allowance in those good old days, that list would stand for over 1000 adherents young and old. They came from all parts of Newbury and from Rowley, Byfield and Salisbury.

Hence it is not incredible that, on special occasions, many thousands flocked to this meeting house. A Portsmouth paper having stated that 15,000 attended Whitefield's funeral, the Essex Gazette conscientiously cuts the number down to 3000. Whereupon a Newburyport writer for the Massachusetts Gazette figures that "fully 10,000 persons were within said house, including the steeple and porch." When the Y. M. C. A. held a state convention here, a few years ago, every seat above and below was crowded; and by count there were only 1200 in the house. Remembering that the audience room used to include the vestibule, and that there were 140 numbered square pews on the main floor, and that the galleries were much deeper than now, we can credit the assertion that, on fair Sabbaths, Mr. Murray's usual audience numbered 2000. The record concerning the ordination of Rev. Samuel J. Mills, and his comrades as missionaries, is that 1500 were in the house, and as

many more outside; while at the communion tables 700 or 800 sat down, and from 100 to 200 ministers were present.

During the pastorates of Parsons, Murray, Dana and Williams, the meeting house retained its earlier from and size. In its broad aisle, at the call of Parsons, stood forth Ezra Lunt and his men, on the identical day when the colonial congress voted to raise an army for the Revolution; thus proving our claim that this was the first company enlisted in said army. Here at a later day, the gallant Murray who had himself served as chaplain, and on whose head the British had set a price of 500 guineas, rallied the drooping spirits of a regiment so that they to a man re-enlisted. Here Murray preached his Thanksgiving sermon on "Jerubaal, or Tyranny's Grove Destroyed and the Altar of Liberty Founded"—perhaps the most eloquent sermon ever preached in New England. And from these doors went forth the Presbytery of the Eastward to greet Washington in 1789 and the official copy of his reply turned up a few months ago. Major General Samuel Holden Parsons, son of the first pastor, was one of Washington's most trusted friends, the value of whose services has been fully proved by the researches of the Sons of the American Revolution.

The list would be a long one that should name all the laymen of note. Prominent among them were Ralph Cross, Jonathan Greenleaf, Richard Pike, William Coombs, Benjamin Harrod, Enoch Titcomb, Moses Pettingell, Hugh Pritchard, the Wheelwrights, Peabodys, the Bartletts, the Simpsons, the Clarks, the Cushings, the Boardmans, and a host of others, not forgetting Lord Timothy Dexter. You will find their honored names on the pew charts that hang in our vestry. What volumes might be written as to their illustrious achievements. How proudly our older people tell of the time when "a sea captain sat at the end of every seat down the broad aisle;" and how thrilling their story told in the history of the Marine Society compiled by Captains Bayley and Jones, members of this congregation.

What another long list might be made of the mothers, wives and sisters of those ruling elders, deacons, soldiers, seamen, and statesmen. We find that, long before the famous "Boston tea party" in 1773, the women of Newburyport met April 22, 1768, at the house of Rev. Mr. Parsons, spun for his good wife 270 skeins of good yarn, heard him preach from Proverbs 31:19; then spurning

tea that carried a British stamp, they drank Labrador tea, made from a local herb, and went home before dark. Their example was praised by the Boston Gazette, and thenceforward Labrador tea was sold everywhere.

In later years such women were here as Miss Phoebe Harrod, the centenarian, and founder of the first Sabbath schools in this place; Mrs. Jane Greenleaf, who is said to have brought 100 souls to Christ, and her daughter, Miss Mary C. Greenleaf, missionary to the Choctaws; Miss Hannah Gould, the poetess, and a host of other noble women.

We do not know the cost of the original edifice. A volume of records containing this, and much other important information, was carried to a distant city some years ago by a person who, in letters to Dr. Vermilye ,claimed his right to do so. Nor do we know the cost of the extensive alterations made in 1829. They may be fairly inferred, however, from a subscription list I have come across for the proposed "Monumental Temple," in 1827, in honor of Whitefield. It was headed by Abraham Wheelwright, and has the names of 73 in all, whose total subscriptions amounted to $6090. The scheme was to tear down the old house and build anew of brick and stone. Dr. Proudfit, who was pastor at the time, was to go to England and obtain supplementary subscriptions, and the result was to be something grand. But the project did not meet with due encouragement. Accordingly the ancient building was thoroughly renovated, and to some degree modernized. The square pews were removed and long ones put in; the audience room was shortened by making the vestibule; the ceiling was lowered; the pulpit was shifted from the side to the end where it now stands; new and narrower galleries were put in; a crypt was made under the pulpit to which were removed the remains of Rev. Messrs. Whitefield, Parsons and Prince, from the tomb where they had been; and a costly cenotaph was erected to Whitefield's memory, designedby Strickland, executed by Struthers, with an inscription by Professor Ebenezer Porter, and the expense was met by William Bartlet, Esq. We find Isaac Johnson's bill for painting two coffins for the remains of Whitefield and Parsons, being two dollars; and a similar charge of two dollars for "cleaning out and whitewashing the tomb and removing their remains." John Moody's bill for making the coffins was eight dollars. Think

of it! A man who by right, should lie in Westminister Abbey, resting in a whitewashed crypt and in a painted coffin! Our Whitefield relics are not many. We have his Bible, his desk, his autograph, his picture, his bronze bust, and his body—what is left of it, including that stolen arm. But what is all this worth, unless we have at least a portion of his consecrated spirit and fervid zeal for the Master?

The ministrations of Proudfit, Stearns and six years of Vermilye's pastorate, were in the edifice as made over in 1829. Extensive alterations and repairs were again made in 1856, on which occasion Dr. Vermilye preached an historical sermon now out of print, but that is a rich mine of material for successors. It was also marked by laying anew the corner stone with impressive ceremonies. The cost of the renovation in his day was $5500 the unpaid portion of which was assumed by the Ladies' and Gentlemen"s Association. The frescoing by an Italian named Philip Guelpa, was admirably done along colonial lines. Tastes differed as to the painted hangings back of the pulpit, but the general sentiment is that of decided approval. The pulpit and doors and woodwork in the vestibule were grained; but a better taste has since had them repainted. The fine mahogany trimmings are left in their natural color. Amid these surroundings have been enjoyed the ministrations of Vermilye, Richardson, Durfee, Newell, Wallace, Sinclair, and the present pastor. From time to time minor repairs have been made; but amid all changes, certain things have remained as of old; particularly the oak framework, the negro pews, the remarkable whispering gallery and the costly sacramental silver.

Adjoining the meeting house have been the serviceable chapels. The first fronted on Beck street and cost $300. In it, as we have ample proof, was started the first Sabbath school on the modern plan, in 1814. In it was also started the first Roman Catholic church in Newburyport; to whom it was sold and removed to Charles street in 1843. In that same year a new chapel was built, fronting on School street, afterward enlarged, and a memorial class room added and halls connecting it with the main room. In this chapel was formed the youngest of our daughters, under the ministry of the member of this church, Rev. John W. Emerson, the evening service being in the main room with a great congregation.

Many members from the Second Presbyterian church also joined it; and with the best of motives, but somewhat to the confusion of historical facts, it took the honored name of the Whitefield Congregational church, which it carries today.

The church music has already been referred to, but we refer to it again, to say that in 1795, forty pounds were voted for a singing school and similar appropriations were subsequently made. Elder Jeremiah Pearson, who had long pitched the tunes and lined out the psalms, entered his written remonstrance against anthems and fugues, but in vain. The choir had their way.

The first pipe organ brought to America was selected by the great musician, George Frederick Handel, was imported by Mr. Thomas Brattle, was left by him to King's Chapel, Boston, and was brought to Newburyport in 1756, and used in St. Paul's church till they wanted a larger one and offered it to this society, which had already bought a small organ in 1828, and wished to exchange it for another. The offer was declined, and the Handel organ was sold in 1836, for $400, to St. John's church, Portsmouth, in whose vestry it remains in good repair. We bought our second organ in 1838 for $1400 and sold it at half price in 1866, when the organ now in use was bought for $3800 of Hook & Hastings of Boston, by whom it has recently been put into thorough repair at a considerable outlay.

We have recognized, as a society, that we had a two-fold obligation; first to support the stated means of grace, for our own sake and that of our offspring. This is our immediate duty, and in its discharge there has adways been a happy agreement between the Session and the officers of the Society. Then in the second place we have the custody of this ancient historic meeting-house, not merely for ourselves but for the sake of the community, who ought to wish to see it kept in repair irrespective of its use as a house of worship; just as patriots wish to retain Faneuil Hall, the old State House in Boston, and other historic edifices.

Hence we rejoice in all that has been done in this direction, whether by gift or legacy, by our own people or by our friends. Shortly after the beginning of my pastorate the old tower clock that had done duty for a century, was replaed by a "memorial clock," costing with its fixtures, about $1000, the generous gift of the late Dr. Daniel T. Plumer, and his three sisters, in memory of

their brother, the late Mr. Albert Plumer. It was started in motion at noon on New Year's day, 1895. A marble mural tablet in memory of the pastors was erected by the late John T. Brown, Esq., at a cost of some $500. The late Miss Elizabeth C. Frost had the church and chapel reshingled and new windows of the old style put into the main building, at an estimated total cost of $1000. Miss Frost also gave a fire-proof safe for the preservation of official records and documents. Sundry donors have given portraits of the pastors, and a pastor's library, the money value of which can hardly be stated.

As our meeting house verged upon its 150th anniversary, the society committee, consisting of Messrs. W. E. Chase, O. O. Jones and G. B. Pettingell, saw the necessity of certain repairs. A new chimney must be built; a new foundation must be laid under the north wall; the tower and belfry needed attention; new furnaces were demanded; and all this represented a large outlay. Meanwhile the Ladies' and Gentlemen's Association organized in 1851, and mainly to look after the parsonage, undertook interior improvements. Of this association Mrs. A. B. Adams is president, Mrs. Harry W. Bayley secretary, and Miss Frances A. Howard treasurer. A committee on renovation was appointed, consisting of Messrs. W. E. Chase, Alexander J. Perkins, and George H. Jaques, and Mrs. J. W. Winder, Mrs. Harry W. Bayley, Mrs. Abbie L. Bray and Mrs. T. Y. Cotton. Mrs. Winder was made the special treasurer of the repair fund, and we would like to extol what she has done if she would permit us to do so. Sundry suppers, concerts, socials, lectures, fairs and other entertainments were instrumental in raising $775. A number of these entertainments were gotten up by the children under the able leadership of Mrs. John M. Bailey. Individual donations varying from $1 to $100 each were made by members of the congregation. The late Mrs. J. A. Greely testified her interest in the work by a lagacy of $500, shortly to be available. Several large sums came from friends either out of town, or else identified with other churches. Of these especial mention shuld be made of $1000 from Mr. Jacob F. Brown of Boston, $200 from Mrs. Georgiana W. Perry, $100 from Dr. A. G. Vermilye, $100 from the sons of Rev. W. W. Newell, $200 from Mr. Edward Graves, $100 from Mrs. Bachmann and Mrs. Bernheimer, $100 from Mrs. F. A. V. Ingersoll, besides

smaller sums from other donors. Captain Charles W. Brown of Pittsburg, besides his check for $100, made a generous offer toward the painting, that remains to be done. Thus from all sources enough has come in to pay for interior and exterior improvements ,as already done, with the exception of a small debt temporarily met by a loan.

Besides repairs, etc. already described, many of which are just as important as if they were not out of sight, we mention the repainting of the interior, the re-adjustment of the floor and the pews; repairs on the organ; the new plastering on a considerable portion of the ceiling; the refrescoing of the walls and ceiling; the new carpet and new upholstering; the historical panel; besides many minor touches that amount to a great deal in the aggregate. We should be glad to give credit to each of the skillful workmen who have enabled this result to be accomplished. But we cannot do otherwise than praise the artistic frescoing under the hand of Mr. John D. Adams, the masonry by Mr. Edgar J. Batchelder, and the carpentry by Mr. Timothy Y. Cotton. The expert ideas of Captain Perkins, the patience, wisdom, fidelity and tact of the several officers and members of the repair committee, amid difficult conditions, can hardly be too highly praised.

Putting together what has been done by the society and the Ladies' and Gentlemen's Association, the entire outlay cannot fall short of $5000 for recent renovations. Adding to this sum the cost of the tower clock, the mural tablet, the repairs on the building during the present pastorate amount to not far from $8000; a much larger sum than was expended in the repairs done in 1856, and fully as much as was done in 1829. My statements are made with the figures before me, and cannot be far from correct. Arrangements are made for the painting and other outside repairs; and it is estimated that, when all is done, the debt of the society, including some arrears on current expenses, will not exceed $2000, and it ought to be much less than this, if such liberality as has already been shown shall continue to be manifested. And you will allow me to say, as one somewhat familiar with church work, that this is a remarkable showing, and one by which all concerned might well feel encouraged.

I could wish that we might be able to say what this old church has done in its lifetime for work outside its own immediate bounds.

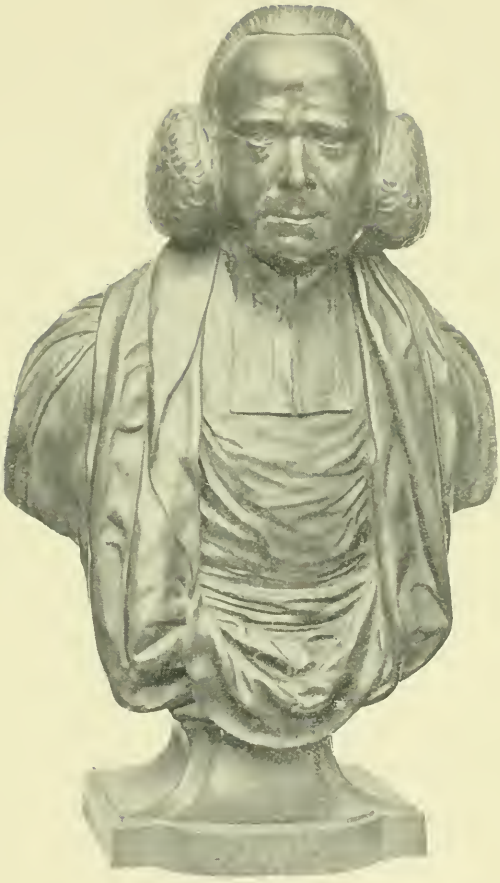
It may not be amiss to say that a fund of about $5000 for city missions left years ago by Mrs. Sarah M. Emery, has been nursed by the trustees appointed by our parish until it amounts to about $18,500, supports for the benefit of the city at large our efficient and beloved missionary Rev. Alexander Dixon. Nor may it be wrong to remind you that three sister churches which have gone out from us share with us in much of the more early history related on this anniversary occasion. Nor may it show any other than an honest pride to say that, during the 160 years and more of our church life we have steadily and loyally given largely to the boards of the denomination, and to local charities of every kind, (many of which were originated by our pastors and laymen) and we have never in our history called for, or received aid from any board or similar source. We have been self-reliant, except as we have, in dark days and bright ones, relied on Him whom we try to serve faithfully as was done by former generations.

Times have changed; our environment is far different from what it was when every cottage and mansion about us was a Yankee home; our resources are far less than in those halcyon days when every pew in the house was taken and a sea captain sat at the end of every pew down the broad aisle. Those days can never come again. But these days are here; days when America is modern, greater, more opulent than ever seemed possible to the minds of our sires. Our heritage is still in hand, and it is something that any church in America might prize. If sacrifice must be made to maintain what a good God has given us, let us take courage, assured that if the liberal deviseth liberal things, by liberal things he shall stand.

We welcome all who have come here this wintry night. We thank you for all you have done for us by your sympathy as well as by your substantial aid. For your sake, as well as our own, and above all, for Christ's sake, we shall try to be loyal to the trust reposed in us through coming years.

This discourse, it should be observed, has mainly dealt with the ancient meeting house and what strictly belongs to it. We honor the godly men and women of former days, and love and esteem the men and women of today. We might have said much as to the ministration of the Word of God, the social life of the church, its Sabbath school, its meetings for prayer, its Christian

Endeavor Society, its missionary societies, and its other agencies for spiritual work. But in closing we do most earnestly remind ourselves and others interested in our welfare, that God's best temples are not those built of wood or stone, and decorated by the precious woods and artistic embellishments brought by generous donors and skillful hands; but they are the human hearts, within which dwells the Holy Spirit, the gift of our Heavenly Father and of His Son, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all true worship must be rendered. May the rich blessings of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with us throughout eternity. Amen!



BUST OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

APPENDIX

At a meeting of the city pastors preparatory to Thanksgiving Day it was moved by Rev. Richard Wright, pastor of the Belleville Church, and unanimously voted by all present, that it would be acceptable to them to join in a special service on Sabbath evening, December 16th, commemorating the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the erection of the "Old South Meeting-house" of Newburyport; and likewise that its pastor, Dr. H. C. Hovey, should be invited to deliver on the occasion an historical discourse. This gracious recognition was officially acknowledged by the Session and the Society's Committee; with the suggestion that the parts of service, aside from the sermon, should be taken by the ministers of the churches from which the First Presbyterian went out, and those other churches that went out from it, and that all churches should be invited. The ministers accepted their parts, except Rev. Laurence Hayward, of the First Religious Society, whose engagements prevented, and his place was filled by Rev. Mr. Wright. Friendly greetings also came from other ministers and laymen, who reluctantly sent their regrets.

On the appointed evening the renovated and greatly improved auditorium was brilliantly illuminated and its pews and galleries were crowded by representatives from most of the local churches, besides guests from neighboring towns. In front of the pulpit

there was a tasteful floral display. The order of service was as follows:

ORDER OF SERVICE

Organ Prelude (Miss Edith Thurlow) "Romance," Op. 26 - - - Svendsen
Call to Worship, (Psalm 122) Rev. Richard Wright.
Invocation, Rev. Leslie C. Greeley.
Duet, (Mrs. Emma Adams Parker and Mr. W. E. Chase, "Twilght," Nevins
Scripture Lesson, Rev. George Plumer Merrill.
Offertory, (Mrs. Parker and Mr. Chase,) "Send Out Thy Light," - - - Sudd
Prayer, Rev. Charles S. Holton.
Solo, (Dr. G. E. L. Noyes), "The New Heaven and the New Earth," - Gaul
Historical Sermon, Rev. Horace C. Hovey, D. D., Pastor of the Church.
Prayer, Rev. T. James Macfaddin.
Hymn.
Benediction.
Postlude, (Miss Thurlow,) Grand Chorus in B, - - - - - - - - - Dubois

The hymn for the occasion was adapted from one that was originally composed for our Centennial Celebration, by Hon. George Lunt, formerly a member of this society, and was sung by the congregation.

SANCTUARY HYMN

Thy temple stands, O God of Grace,
Above our thought, beneath our tread,
Its ample floor, unmeasured space,
Its arch with worlds unnumbered spread.

This earthly temple of thy praise,
How glorious and how dear its name!
Thy blessing crowned its ancient days,
Thy promised blessing stands the same.

Here, on our sires, an honored race,
Thy dews descended like the rain,
While here they met to seek thy face,
Nor sent a prayer to Heaven in vain.

No gorgeous rites, nor shrines of gold,
We in these sacred precincts see;
But grant the fervent faith of old
To bind us closer, Lord, to Thee!

And here, while ages roll away,
May children's children all appear,
And learn to love and praise and pray,
And find their God, their Savior, near!

A tribute is due to our local historians, Hon. Caleb Cushing, Joshua Coffin, Esq., Dr. J. L. Ewell, Mrs. E. Vale Smith, Hon. J. J. Currier, and others, to whom our community is greatly indebted for the preservation of facts. Mention is also made of anniversary discourses by Rev. S. P. Williams in 1826; Dr. J. F. Stearns in 1846; and Dr. A. G. Vermilye, in 1856 (interleaved by useful notes); of my compilation in 1896 of the "Origin and Annals of the Old South Church;" and of Dr. C. C. Wallace's manuscript history of New England Presbyterianism.

During the author's pastorate he has taken pains to gather from various quarters, ancient documents and occasionally a book of previously missing records, and account books of the church and society; some of which had not seen the light for a century or more. The most precious find of this nature was about six years ago, in what is known as "the sexton's cottage" adjoining the meeting-house. A closet in it had been kept nailed fast for fully fifty years. On opening it in 1900 we found only a very old chest whose contents were examined by the late John T. Brown, Esq., and myself, and they proved to be records, letters and other documents of the parish, mainly between the years 1774 and 1824, though some of them were still more ancient. All these I have examined and assorted with care, mending the broken pages, and filing them in due order in the fire-proof safe of our church. Of these materials we have made use in preparing the present discourse, thus supplementing what has been gleaned patiently from other sources already indicated; though, in a popular address, we have not deemed it wise to encumber the pages by a formal quotation of authorities.

In conclusion: if it be said that our congregation is not as large numerically or as strong financially, as in its earlier days, we are happy to say that it has a good membership now, as compared with the neighboring churches; and certainly, at no period have its adherents been more loyal than today, or more generous according to their means. By existing, under such difficult conditions and amid such modified environment as we have described in this discourse, we have at least vindicated our right to exist. Since this venerable meeting-house was built, so many sister churches have lowered the "Blue Flag" which we have kept flying, that, as recently as 1850, the only churches in Massachusetts connected

with a Presbytery were the two of our name in Newburyport. Since then so much lost ground has been retrieved as to enable us to report in 1906, that there are 22 Presbyterian churches in Massachusetts, 10 in Connecticut, 7 in New Hampshire, 2 in Maine, 3 in Vermont 5 in Rhode Island a total of 49 for New England with a total membership of 10,000. Rejoice with us in this steady, progressive, wholesome growth, and again we say, "Rejoice!" The time for sectarian strife and narrowness has gone by. These are days of increasing Christian fellowship. If our words in this discourse and its appendix have been mostly of and for Presbyterians, it is simply for the occasion; for we regard ourselves only as a part of that universal Church of Christ to which our friends belong who share in our present rejoicing. We claim no more for ourselves than we would gladly accord to all, namely, the right to avow and maintain honestly formed religious opinions. The greatest of all institutions is the Church of Christ, filled with the Spirit of Christ blessed by the presence of Christ, loving all whom Christ loves, and seeking to save all whom Christ would save.

Fidelity to the facts requires us to admit that the fathers had different ideas as to the free use of ardent spirits from those that now prevail; and they hardly felt it possible to raise a house, or build a wall, ordain a minister or entertain a Presbytery, without a hospitable display of rum such as would now be shocking. Yet this very thing was what finally awoke the consciences of Christians and originated those early temperance societies of which men like Dr. Lyman Beecher and Daniel Dana were leaders.

The question has been asked why our corner stone was not laid till a century after the erection of the meeting-house. The reason conjectured when our most recent repairs were undertaken has since been confirmed. The original edifice was not founded on a rock, but on mighty oaken beams laid directly on the ground. Hence there was no corner stone, or any other kind of stone till in 1856, after the lapse of the first century, a belated corner stone was laid with Masonic ceremonies by the Knights Templars, and addresses by Doctors Dana, Vermilye and Withington, and Elder Moses Pettingell. The copper box under the corner stone holds various objects as described in the columns of The Herald for July 17th, 1856; and on the lid were engraved the names of Dr. Ver-

milye, as pastor; and the building committee, viz., Benjamin Harrod, John N. Cushing, William Pritchard, I. H. Boardman, and William Graves. The name of James M. Currier is also given, as sexton, treasurer and collector.

In vindication of the vast seating capacity of the ancient edifice prior to its reduction to the present size, we find it stated that there were on the main floor 140 square pews, and 100 more in the three deep galleries, making 240 square pews in all, which might easily hold 2000 people, as has often been claimed. The "whispering gallery" did not belong to the original house, but is a feature of the renovation.

In his address at the laying of the corner stone, Dr. Withington remarked that he came to the First Church of Newbury on Dr. Dana's recommendation, that his third sermon was preached from our pulpit, and that it was by the united efforts of Dana and Withington that harmony and peace were restored to the congregations that had been estranged for generations past. He predicted that nothing hereafter could ever again disturb the strong pure friendship that had come to exist between those branches of the one Church of Christ.

THE CENOTAPH

Official Directory, January 1, 1907

PASTOR:—Rev. Horace Carter Hovey, D. D., 60 High Street.

RULING ELDERS:—

Aaron B. Adams, 15 Parsons Street.
John M. Bailey, 60 Lime Street.
William Binley, 34 Prospect Street.
Matthew Glenn, 1 Garden Street.
George H. Jaques, 16 Boardman Street.
Oliver O. Jones, 52 High Street.
Alvah W. Leavitt, 37 Prospect Street.
James M. Woods, West Newbury.

DEACONS:—

Aaron B. Adams.
John M. Bailey.
James M. Woods.

Clerk of the Church and the Session:—William Binley.
Treasurer of Church, and Clerk of the Society:—Alvah W. Leavitt.
Superintendent of Sabbath School:—Oliver O. Jones.
President of Christian Endeavor Society:—George H. Jaques.

SOCIETY'S COMMITTEE:—

William E .Chase, Chairman, 5 High Street, Newbury.
Oliver O. Jones, 52 High Street.
George B. Pettingell, 52½ Marlborough Street.

Society Treasurer:—Miss Jennie E. Osgood, 49 Purchase Street.
Society Collector:—Prentiss H. Reed, 55 Lime Street.
Music Committee:—Lucius H. Greely, Hiram MacIntosh, John M. Bailey.
Musical Director:—Dr. G. E. L. Noyes.
Organist:—Miss Edith Thurlow.
Janitor:—Daniel P. Thurlow, 10 Spring Street.

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